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The Iceman

Lawrence Ditto Young

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The Penn Publishing Company

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THE ICEMAN

A Farce in One Act

BY

LAWRENCE DITTO YOUNG



PHILADELPHIA
THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
1909

PS 635
.Z9 Y6.7

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12-40453

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The Iceman

CHARACTERS

GEORGE, } *returning from college with a surprise.*
THE ICEMAN, } *played by same person.*
LUCILE'S FATHER.
LUCILE, *almost engaged to George.*
THE COOK.

TIME IN REPRESENTATION :—One hour and a quarter.

NOTICE TO PROFESSIONALS

This play is published for amateur production only. Professionals are forbidden the use of it in any form or under any title without the consent of the author, who may be addressed in care of the publishers.

PROPERTIES

Drop painted to represent the back of a house, with a back door and a window on each side of the door. A hole big enough to permit the passage of a man is cut in it where refrigerator stands against it.

A refrigerator at least five feet high, by four wide and three deep. A lid at top, a door in front, and a door with spring hinges at back. A hole in bottom so voice may be heard from inside. A barrel three feet high and four wide with ashes in it. A skillet with a handle. A large spoon in skillet. A clothes-line and pair of trousers. A mop, a broom, a washboard, and a small carpet-sweeper. An engagement ring. One other ring. A cream pitcher. An imitation pineapple. A set of red-covered foot forms. A mess of broken crockery. A piece of ice, size of teacup. A rolling-pin.

COSTUMES

GEORGE. Black college suit, trousers a little short, small brown felt hat, low shoes, red stockings, a false beard and moustache to look as ridiculous as possible, and a dickey collar with necktie attached. As THE ICEMAN, he wears same trousers and stockings; huge pair of rubber boots one or two sizes too large, so as to slip easily on and off; large black felt hat, and large blue flannel shirt; carries a pair of ice-tongs.

COOK. Stout, Irish, wears a red wig, green dress, large shoes.

LUCILE. Natural hair, white dress, small shoes. LUCILE and COOK may easily be played by the same person if desired, by making a quick change of wig, dress, and shoes, and omitting the cook's lines at the end of the sketch.

LUCILE'S FATHER. Black frock suit, portly figure, gray wig. This character may be omitted, and the sketch played by either two or three persons.

The Iceman

SCENE.—*At the rear of any home, opening from the kitchen to a back yard. The drop shows the back of a house with two kitchen windows and a practicable door which opens on small back porch or platform and a flight of four steps down to yard. Beside steps, at the right, is a large refrigerator with a lid at the top to put in ice, and a door in front. At the left of steps there is a low ash barrel. On upper step is a skillet to look as much as possible like a cup, and in it is a large spoon. A clothes-line holding a pair of trousers extends across stage, one end of it attached to a hook over refrigerator and dangling down. A mop, a broom, a washboard, and a baby carpet-sweeper stand at the side of steps.*

(From inside kitchen door is heard a scream in COOK'S voice: "Soak him! Soak him good!" Then a shout in masculine tones: "Confound your impudence! Get out!" GEORGE comes sailing through the kitchen door as though he had been kicked, and a man's foot appears behind him. He lands sitting on the stage, slides, folding his arms as he goes, and comes to a standstill. He is dressed in a rakish college suit of black, with a little brown felt hat turned up in front. He has on a false beard and moustache which he now takes off. He is boyishly petulant.)

GEORGE. Mercy, how blustering! *(Turning his head back toward the door.)* And what a lovely welcome I did get. You little know who you kick, you old ruffian. He kicks me out of the back door. He wouldn't even honor me by kicking me out of the front door. *(Gloomily.)* I wrote and told them I'd be home from college to-day, and I disguised myself to give them a surprise. I got the surprise. *(Meditating, and then with strong emphasis as he shakes*

his head.) And worst of all, I dropped the ring in the cream pitcher. I absolutely must get hold of that cream pitcher. (*Shaking his finger.*) I shall never speak to Lucile again. She's false.

(*Enter COOK at back door. Before she sees him, GEORGE claps on his beard and moustache, and as she catches sight of him, he picks up broom on the defensive.*)

COOK (*carrying tray containing cream pitcher, etc. Espying GEORGE, she starts back in fright, and remains close to the stoop for safety.*) Oh, you robber! Oh, you thief! How dare you hang around here? Help! Master, master! Come quick.

(*At her call there is a stamping in kitchen of hurrying feet, and LUCILE's father pops out on stoop. His face is red; he is old and gray, but active. He is angry and puffs irately.*)

FATHER. What's the trouble?

COOK (*pointing at GEORGE*). Look there.

FATHER (*at sight of GEORGE gives indications of incipient apoplexy. He is so full of rage that he shakes, but cannot speak. He splutters, making a hissing noise.*) S-s-s-s-s-s.

GEORGE (*to COOK*). He ought to have a muffler with that exhaust.

FATHER (*who has brought with him from the kitchen a rolling-pin, which he raises over his head, shaking it at GEORGE. Still he can make no sound except*) S-s-s-s-s-s.

GEORGE. Can't I get you some sarsaparilla?

FATHER (*finding his voice, and with a howl*). Scoundrel!

GEORGE. Me?

FATHER (*disregarding question*). I kicked you, sir.

GEORGE (*with a reminiscant look skyward*). Yes, now you mention it, I seem to remember the incident.

FATHER. I shall kick you again, sir, and then hand you over to the police, sir. (*Descends from stoop.*)

GEORGE (*with deprecating raise of his hand*). Now let me explain —

FATHER (*in a towering fury as he advances and GEORGE retreats*). Explain the insults you heaped upon my daugh-

ter? Explain entering my house, you burglar? You shall explain yourself to a magistrate.

GEORGE. One moment. Only just one moment, and I can make everything plain.

FATHER. You deserve hanging, sir.

GEORGE. Paper hanging, or strap hanging?

FATHER (*making ponderous pass at GEORGE with the rolling-pin, which he dodges narrowly*). It's lucky for you I can control my temper or I would strike you. Get out of here!

(*He has been edging GEORGE toward exit and now he makes a rush for him.*)

GEORGE (*as he runs off*). All right for you, crosspatch!

FATHER (*returning to C. of stage and speaking to COOK*). There, if you see anything more of that burglar, call me and I will have him arrested. I must go to Lucile for she's very frightened. (*As he goes in through kitchen door, he mutters to himself.*) The wretch! The puppy!

COOK. That man ought to be behind the bars; he's bad. (*She doesn't see GEORGE, who now peeks around the corner, and seeing nothing of FATHER, comes back onto stage and tiptoes up behind COOK. He is just in the act of reaching for the cream pitcher when she sees him.*) Ouch! (*She jumps.*)

GEORGE (*following her with mincing steps, and inspecting contents of tray curiously*). Is that a cream pitcher on your tray?

COOK (*in terror*). Don't come near me! Don't come near me! You got the evil eye. I'm afraid of you.

GEORGE. You better be, for I eat little girls like you. If that's the cream pitcher (*scowling*), give it to me at once or I'll do some work on you.

(*He commences to make hypnotic passes at her with his hands, and little kicks, watching to see how they affect her. For a moment she looks at him in horror; then becomes satisfied that she can't be hurt, and descends from the stoop.*)

COOK. Pooh! I don't believe you could hurt any one. I ain't afraid of you.

(*She picks up the broom which he has dropped, and while he is still passing at her, she taps him over the head with it.*)

GEORGE (*desists and retreats*). You're a bum subject.

COOK (*accusingly and motioning back at the house*). If I had been the master, I wouldn't have kicked you. (GEORGE *gives a little jump; feeling of himself, and looking behind him. He does this each time the word "kick" is spoken.*) I would have shot you.

GEORGE (*looking at the tray again*). That is a cream pitcher, isn't it? Yes, of course it is.

COOK. Yes, and you would have stolen it, if you hadn't been caught. I never see a man with eyes the color of yours that wasn't a crook. It's lucky for you that Mr. George, that's coming home to-day, wasn't around to see what you did, or he would have fixed you. You cruel, wicked man!

GEORGE (*not noticing her*). It's a silver cream pitcher, isn't it?

COOK. Never you mind what it is, and don't look at it like that or I'll call the master again. (*Gets strenuous and shakes her fist at him.*) You great hulking brute, to frighten that poor innocent girl so!

GEORGE (*unconcerned*). I should like to buy that cream pitcher.

COOK. Buy it! Yes, but you'd rather steal it. (*Curiously.*) What do you want with it, anyway?

GEORGE. Well, what do you do with cream when you get tired of it?

COOK. Oh, I make pancakes and such.

GEORGE. Then I want to make a few pancakes. (*Reaching into his pocket.*) Here's five dollars —

COOK (*coming close to him*). If you were to offer me a thousand dollars for it, I wouldn't give it to you.

GEORGE. Oh, I wouldn't offer you that much, you know. It isn't worth it.

COOK. What isn't?

GEORGE. The ring. (*Confusion.*) I mean the pitcher.

COOK (*suspiciously*). What ring?

GEORGE (*airily*). Mere chaff of mine. (*She commences to put articles in at top of refrigerator, and as she goes to put in cream pitcher, he comes forward and says :*) Let me

put it in for you. (*She frightens him away. He picks up skillet, goes through the motions of stirring it and tasting it, upon which he goes back to her and says, extending the skillet toward her :*) I would like a little more cream in my coffee, please.

COOK (*angrily*). You villain ! I'll bet you're a burglar. You tried to choke Miss Lucile.

GEORGE. No, I didn't, but she deserves it. I say, you know I must have that cream pitcher.

COOK. Well, you're not going to get it, and if you don't get out of this yard at once, I'll call the master, and he won't be so easy with you this time.

GEORGE (*giving a little jump and looking apprehensively around*). Not so easy this time !

COOK. You might as well go, for there won't any one get into this refrigerator to-day, except the iceman, and I'm going to stay right here and watch for him.

GEORGE. Oh, you let the iceman look in your refrigerator, do you ?

COOK. Of course.

GEORGE (*brightening*). Do you let him walk right up to the refrigerator, and open it, and put in the ice himself ?

COOK. Certainly, and he'll go for you when he hears how you've talked to me. He likes me, does Bill, and (*quizzically*) he's over six feet tall. (*GEORGE looks nervous. A click of ice-tongs is heard in wings, and the rattle of a wagon, while a strong voice commands, "Whoa ! Do ye want any ice ?"*) That's him, just next door.

GEORGE. The iceman ! (*An expansive smile spreads over his face, and taking a bill from his pocket, he looks meaningly from the direction of the noise to the refrigerator.*) I guess I had better go before Bill comes.

(*Exit.*)

COOK (*chuckling*). I never see such goings-on. Miss Lucile and her father was at breakfast, when through the back door, and into the dining-room walks this tramp with the beard. (*Motioning after GEORGE.*) First thing he reaches across the table and takes Miss Lucile by the hand, and she is too surprised to do anything. Father, he says : (*puffing*) "How dare you, sir ?" The tramp looks at Miss Lucile's hand and says : "False woman ! I shall never see

you more." Then something happened I couldn't see, and the tramp made a grab at the cream pitcher. He reached into it and got his hand caught, and he commenced dancing around the table like a wild man, trying to get his hand out. (*Laughing.*) "Are you crazy?" says Father. "Don't speak to me," says the tramp, and he starts to walk out with the cream pitcher still on his hand. Father roars at him: "Bring back that cream pitcher," but he don't stop, and Father, spry as a cricket, jumps out of his chair, snatches the cream pitcher off the tramp's hand, takes him by the collar, rushes him to the back door, and kicks him out. (*Kicking with glee.*) "Get out, you shrimp!"

GEORGE (*as iceman, in wings and at the top of his lungs*). Ice!

COOK (*jumps and looks around*). Goodness! (*Then as GEORGE backs onto stage with a small piece of ice which he drags in ice-tongs as though it were a great burden, she says :*) It's a new iceman. Are you the iceman?

GEORGE (*still trailing ice. He wears a huge pair of rubber boots, a big black felt hat, a handkerchief knotted around his throat, and a blue flannel shirt. He adopts a hoarse, gruff voice, dropping into his natural tone when excited*). No. I'm High Speed Harry, the Motor Maniac. Scatter, Birdie; my clutch is slipping. (*He backs into her.*)

COOK (*getting out of the way*). Where's Bill?

GEORGE. Bill's sick.

COOK. What's the matter with him?

GEORGE (*still leaning over ice, and turning his head toward her*). He's got appendicitis. He ate a keg of wire nails and he didn't notice they were rusty.

COOK. You're pretty fresh, ain't you?

GEORGE. So fresh I'm always early.

COOK (*indicating ice*). Be them twenty pound?

GEORGE (*nodding emphatically*). Twenty pounds, six ounces. Lift the lid before it shrinks.

COOK. Say, who are you?

GEORGE. What's it to you?

COOK. Well, you don't look like a real iceman.

GEORGE. Of course not. I'm Jack Frost, the substitute.

COOK. 'Oh (*holding up lid*), be careful where you put it.

GEORGE (*puts in ice and looks warily over the contents of refrigerator. His head inside, he asks in muffled tones*). Is that a cream pitcher?

COOK (*starting back and releasing lid, which comes down with a slam*). Another man after that cream pitcher!

GEORGE (*escapes falling lid by a hair, and then wobbles his head in fright. He screams in his natural voice*). Do you want to mash me?

COOK (*apologetically*). You scared me about that cream pitcher. When the master kicked out the tramp——

GEORGE (*with grim interest*). He kicked him out, did he?

COOK (*kicking*). Get out, you shrimp!

GEORGE (*jumps and catches at his after anatomy. Then in a falsetto scream*). Don't say that. I can't stand it.

COOK. What's the matter? A burglar walked right into the dining-room to-day, and tried to steal that cream pitcher. Is it any wonder I'm excited about it? (*Fearsomely.*) He was a big, tall man, with long, yellow teeth, and a beard, and his hands were like claws. He looked like an escaped convict. Did you see anything of him as he was leaving? It was just before you came.

GEORGE. Yes, I saw him. He had horns and a tail, didn't he?

COOK (*seriously*). I didn't see them; but I guess he did. (GEORGE *backs into clothes-line with trousers on it.*) Look out for those trousers.

GEORGE (*he looks at them vengefully a moment, and then asks*). Are they Father's?

COOK. Yes.

GEORGE (*as he hears this, he makes a spring at them and lets them have a strong kick in the seat*). That pays you back, you coward!

COOK. What are you trying to do?

GEORGE. I'll show him. (*Indicating refrigerator.*) Open it up. I want a look.

COOK. What do you want in there?

GEORGE. I want to move the ice. I think I put it on a huckleberry.

COOK (*advancing threateningly with mop*). Get away from there.

GEORGE. Now, Penelope, don't be cross. I'm only going to look.

COOK (*with an angry shake of her head*). Oh, no; you're not.

GEORGE (*as a reprimand*). You're annoying me. (*He*

contemplates refrigerator in a businesslike manner.) Don't get overheated. (*Lifts lid again.*)

COOK (*makes vicious pass at him with mop which he cleverly dodges*). No, you don't.

GEORGE (*backs away and calls*). Help! Help! The dog is loose! (*Then pacificatingly.*) Be quiet, Queenie, or you'll bend your bangs. There, keep that pose. (*In explanation.*) I just love to look at an angry woman.

COOK (*raising mop for another blow*). Get out of here!

GEORGE (*walks up to her on tiptoe, and shaking his finger under her nose, says*). Don't you dare frown at me, or I'll cry.

COOK (*goes for him*). Get out. I think you're after that cream pitcher.

GEORGE (*raising his hands and falling to his knees, says piteously*). Oh, kind sir. 'Tis me child. Me only child in yon burning mansion. (*Indicating refrigerator.*) Won't you bring her forth in safety?

COOK (*kicking at him*). Get out, you shrimp!

GEORGE (*jumps up and grabs washboard which he holds behind him as a protector. Then screams*). Don't say that to me. I can't stand it.

COOK (*pursuing*). Get out of this yard.

GEORGE (*he crouches, holds ice-tongs in front of his face, and working them like jaws, he growls*). Brrr! Brrr! I'm a lion. Brrr! If you come one step closer I'll chew thee into a lionized potato. (*Drops tongs, and falling to his knees, holds washboard in front of him, and hiding behind it, says :*) Hit me where you will, but don't kick me.

COOK (*swinging mop*). Get out!

(*She chases him madly around the stage.*)

GEORGE (*nimble in spite of rubber boots, and pointing*). Look out behind you, Buttercup. Look out!

(*During the instant her back is turned, he jumps into ash barrel, drops out of sight, and when she turns again she can't find him.*)

COOK. Hey, you. Where are you? (*Frightened.*) Where did that feller go? (*Looking around in amazement, she becomes more bewildered, and finally thoroughly scared, she runs off the stage calling :*) Miss Lucile! Miss Lucile!

GEORGE (*bobbing top of his head out of barrel, and in a still small whisper*). Ice! (COOK's shouts of "Miss Lucile" are still to be heard and he calls after her :) Say, tell Miss Lucile there's a nail in this barrel and it's full of ashes. (*His clothes have become covered with ashes. He looks around and his whole expression changes. Still standing in the barrel, he begins :*) My! What a busy day! (*Feeling himself tenderly.*) Lucile told me she would wait to marry me even if it was twenty years, and when I came home I was going to surprise her with an engagement ring. But (*his voice raises*) she has married some one else. (*Excitedly and with a screech.*) I tell you I saw the wedding ring on her finger. False, fickle girl! I'll never trust a woman again. I'm going down to the Panama Canal, and get killed with fever. That'll fix her. (*Musing.*) I wonder who she married? Perhaps she married the iceman. That's me. Perhaps she married me. (*Ruefully.*) Oh, it was terrible! I wrote and told them I'd be home to-day, and just for a joke, just a little fun, you know, I thought I'd disguise myself with a beard and give them a surprise. I'm president of the college dramatic society, and I guess I can act if anybody can. When I got in the dining-room—(*shakes his head*) then (*with a despairing gasp*) I saw—I saw—there upon her finger a wedding ring. I was so startled I dropped the engagement ring, and it fell into the cream pitcher. I tried to fish it out, and then the trouble started. I gave the iceman two dollars to let me take his clothes, and now (*shaking his fist at the house*) I don't want anything more to do with that family; they're too rough. Lucile scorned me and (*with a little jump*) Father kicked me. I hope he hurt his foot. So there. I'm never going to speak to any of them again. All I want is my ring. I had to save up for three months to buy that ring, and (*half sobbing*) it cost me sixty-five dollars. It's in that refrigerator. (*Getting out of barrel, and approaching refrigerator.*) I saw the cream pitcher when I looked in. (*Lifting lid of refrigerator, he reaches down and feels among contents, raising his head to make each declaration.*) That's lard. Isn't it slippery? Those are peaches. That might be clothes-pins, or maybe it's sausage. (*Shrieks.*) Ouch! That was a porcupine, or a pincushion. (*Reaching farther.*) There, it bit me again. I'll get it into a corner and take it by the neck. (*Grunting.*) You can't

get away from me. It's a rabbit. No. It's a flat-iron. And he stuck me again. Now I got you. (*In great disgust he produces a pineapple. He drops it back, and again reaches down. From now on his tones are muffled, while he puts his head farther and farther into refrigerator, as he obviously feels about for the cream pitcher.*) What has become of that pitcher? There it is. No, that's a jelly roll. I smell fish. What's that? Let go my hand. It's that pineapple again. (*All this time he has been crawling farther and farther into refrigerator.*) That must be it. Where the deuce is it?

(*At this he reaches too far and falls in out of sight, accompanied by a tremendous crash of crockery.*)

(*Enter LUCILE. She wears white, is young and pretty, and looks her extreme innocence.*)

LUCILE (*looks around inquiringly for a moment, and then although she does not see any one, says firmly but a little nervously*). Get out of this yard!

(*In the meantime, GEORGE, unknown to audience, gets out of refrigerator through a concealed door at the back and through a hole in the drop. He removes the rubber boots, puts them on foot forms covered with red socks, and then crawling back into refrigerator, sits down and holds the boots so they just show over the top and look as though he was standing on his head. He waves them convulsively as though he were struggling to get out. His voice is heard through hole in bottom of refrigerator.*)

GEORGE. I don't think I care to look any more for that old pitcher. I think I shall get out. (*He waves and kicks with the boots, and gives all the evidences of a fearful and ineffectual effort to escape.*) Help!

LUCILE. How familiar that sounds. (*Seeing the waving boots and looking dubiously at them.*) Are you the iceman?

GEORGE (*the boots nod in the affirmative*). Is that you, Cook?

LUCILE (*with a negative shake of her head but in a tone which he cannot be expected to hear*). No, this is not the cook. This is Miss Lucile. Please come out. I wish to speak to you.

GEORGE. Hello, Bridget. I've scrambled some eggs for you. I'm just dead stuck on this refrigerator.

LUCILE. Please come out. I wish to speak to you.

GEORGE. What's that? Did you say pork and beans?

LUCILE. Please come out. (*Angrily.*)

GEORGE. Speak louder. I can't hear you. Say, Cook, do something to get me out of here. I've been upside down for twenty minutes.

LUCILE (*timidly and half to herself*). Why! Perhaps he can't get out.

GEORGE. Hurry up! You handsome gorilla! Why don't you do something?

LUCILE. The poor man is caught. What shall I do?

(*She looks wildly around for some means of assisting him.*)

GEORGE (*with a roar*). Take me out.

LUCILE (*from now on all her talk to him is shouted*). I don't see how I can.

GEORGE. Well, then, take out the pineapple. There ain't room for both of us in here.

LUCILE. I can't.

GEORGE. You red-nosed old mummy! Do something. I'm getting cold.

LUCILE (*coming close to refrigerator*). I should like to help you, sir.

GEORGE. What did you say?

LUCILE. I should like to help you.

GEORGE. If you're not going to let me out, Sibyl, you might at least pull the icicles out of my ears.

LUCILE (*wringing her hands in despair*). What can I do?

GEORGE. You bunghead! Are you going to leave me in here all day?

LUCILE. What can I do?

GEORGE. Get hold of my legs and heave.

LUCILE (*looking nervously at the boots*). I don't like to.

GEORGE. Well, I don't like standing on my head in this butter crock. Hurry up! I think I'm dying.

LUCILE. He says he's dying. I must do something. (*Goes close to boots which continue to wave, so that she can't catch them.*) Please be still a moment.

GEORGE. Hustle up, and when I get out I'll mop up the yard with you.

LUCILE (*she gets hold of one boot and tugs at it without success*). Oh, dear! I'm not strong enough.

GEORGE. Of course you are, you old hod-carrier. Put your mind on it.

LUCILE (*she tries again. In despair*). I can't do it. I'll call Father.

GEORGE (*frantic wavings of boots, and shrieks*). No. No! Don't. Don't!

LUCILE (*astonished*). I won't, then.

GEORGE. Say, out there.

LUCILE. Well?

GEORGE. Isn't there a washboard on the steps?

LUCILE. Yes.

GEORGE. Well, get it and pry me out.

LUCILE (*she takes up the washboard, and inserts the end of it between the refrigerator and his boots. She gives a strong pry*). Oh!

GEORGE (*with a roar*). Stop it! You'll break my leg.

LUCILE (*she desists*). I'm so sorry.

GEORGE. Hello, McGinnis!

LUCILE. Well?

GEORGE. I'm cold. Look here, Bedelia. Didn't I see a clothes-line out there?

LUCILE (*looking at it*). Yes.

GEORGE. Tie the end around my feet and heave me out.

LUCILE (*she does this, using the line as a block and tackle over hook. But she only succeeds in removing boots from the forms and lifting them to the hook where they hang. She has her back to her work and thinks she is dragging him out*). My! What a small man to come out so easily. (*She turns and contemplates the result with horror. The stocking feet are red.*) Gracious! What have I done?

(*She commences to run about the stage in excitement.*)

GEORGE (*raging*). What are you doing; trying to hang me? Now my feet are getting cold. (*Pause.*) Well, why don't you do something?

LUCILE (*dancing up and down*). What can I do? What can I do?

GEORGE. Is there a door in front?

LUCILE. Yes.

GEORGE. Well, open it. Maybe that'll do some good.

LUCILE (*as she opens the door at front, GEORGE rolls out*

onto stage, dragging with him all the contents of refrigerator, except cream pitcher; a miscellaneous array of broken dishes, etc. The front door remains open, and the cream pitcher is plainly to be seen inside. GEORGE is in red stockings. He is very, very mad). Heavens!

GEORGE (standing up, blinking, and not seeing her). You carrot-headed old pickle! Did you think I could stay in there forever? (Seeing LUCILE, he says aside, with a gasp :) Lucile! (His tone changes, and from now on his talk is part in his own voice, and part in iceman's growling. He pulls his hat over his eyes, and is still unrecognizable. He roams dizzily around for a moment, blows on his hands to get them warm, and then simpers :) Excuse me. I thought you were the green beetle. Aren't we having a chilly summer? (She looks at him doubtfully while he removes the milk which he has accumulated, nervously runs the carpet-sweeper over his trousers to brush them, and generally tries to straighten his disorderly apparel.) Very frosty, I assure you.

(He gets down on all fours and puts his head down to the stage as though he were going to stand on his head.)

LUCILE. What's the matter?

GEORGE. I've been wrong side up so long that it's not natural for me to stand on my feet.

LUCILE. Are you an iceman?

GEORGE. You bet I'm an ice—man. (Slapping himself for warmth, and then putting his hands on the various portions of his body.) I had no idea a refrigerator could hold so many different things. (Sniffing.) The cheese was the worst, though.

LUCILE. Who are you? You remind me of some one I used to know, and I can't think who it is.

GEORGE (striking a pose). I'm Chilblain Charley, and I'm full of quicksilver.

LUCILE (solicitously). Are you cold?

GEORGE. Well (with a shudder, while his teeth chatter), I don't feel as though I were likely to burst into flame. (Feels of his nose.) My nose is loose. I tried to cut a slice of jelly roll with it. (He looks at boots, and motioning to clothes-line, says :) Work your aeroplane, and bring back my pumps.

LUCILE (she releases the clothes-line, and the boots come

down to stage with one end of the line tied to them). There.

GEORGE (*as he puts them on*). They fit a little often, don't they? (*He is sitting on stage.*)

LUCILE (*very sternly*). What were you doing in that refrigerator?

GEORGE (*he springs up in fright at her, forgets about the clothes-line tied to his boots, becomes all mixed up with the line and trousers, then trips and falls, upon which he fights and worries the trousers around the stage like a puppy*). Take that, Father's trousers.

LUCILE (*watching and judging him crazy*). What were you doing in that refrigerator?

GEORGE (*airily*). Oh, I thought I was going to spoil, so I tried cold storage. (*Feels of his mouth and brings tobasco sauce bottle from his pocket.*) Have you got a fire extinguisher handy? I ate some of this to keep from freezing, and now my teeth are smoking.

(*He approaches refrigerator and looks in.*)

LUCILE. Did you drop anything?

GEORGE. Yes. My temperature.

LUCILE. You poor man. You must be very weak. Shall I get you something to warm you?

GEORGE (*drily*). Got a gas stove? (*He looks at her with a mournful shake of his head.*) False, traitorous girl!

LUCILE (*incredulously*). What?

GEORGE. Am I your husband?

LUCILE (*in abject and patent surprise*). What!

GEORGE (*vehemently*). Shame on you!

LUCILE. What for?

GEORGE (*sternly*). For wrecking a good man's heart.

LUCILE (*in explanation; tapping her forehead*). His brain, I guess.

GEORGE (*shouting*). Perhaps your brain would be numb too, if you had been standing on your head on a cake of ice for half an hour. (*Approaching her and shaking his finger at her.*) Oh, you bad, wicked woman! I met him. I heard what he said.

LUCILE. Met whom? Heard what who said?

GEORGE. That grand, fine, handsome young man with the intelligent face that your father kicked (*jump*) out of the house. You—you—married woman—you.

LUCILE (*with decision*). The cook said you were.

GEORGE. Were what?

LUCILE (*painfully*). Drunk and crazy, or crazy drunk, or crazy or drunk. I couldn't understand which.

GEORGE (*melodramatically*). Young lady, be careful! Even an iceman has feelings.

LUCILE (*stamps her foot and then says angrily*). You mustn't tell such lies.

GEORGE. Oh, dear!

(*With a sad shake of his head he starts to climb back into refrigerator.*)

LUCILE. What are you doing now?

GEORGE. I'm going to put myself on ice again; it's too warm for me out here. (*Whimpering.*) If you could see my poor hungry wife and children —

LUCILE (*relenting*). The poor man! Here, take these.

(*She picks up the provisions which rolled from the refrigerator, and piles them into his arms.*)

GEORGE (*peering at front door of refrigerator*). The youngest child is just at the age when she likes cream.

LUCILE. Perhaps there is some in the refrigerator.

GEORGE. Perhaps.

LUCILE. No, you spilled it all.

GEORGE (*going close and looking in at lower door*). The second youngest likes cream pitchers pretty well.

LUCILE (*she takes out the cream pitcher, extends it toward him and he snatches at it with avidity*). Here, take this one. (*Something in his haste frightens her for she draws it back suddenly and says :*) No. I can't give you this; it's solid silver.

GEORGE (*with a groan of disappointment*). Oh, rats!

(*He half starts to take it away from her, but she puts it back in refrigerator, closes the door and begins :*)

LUCILE. You bold, bad man. You would steal it, wouldn't you? Cook said you were not to be trusted. Get out of this yard or I shall immediately report you to your company.

GEORGE (*hoarsely*). He said his name was George.

LUCILE (*forgetting everything, running to him, and*

shaking him so that all the provisions fall out of his arms).
What! Who said that?

GEORGE. The man I met coming out of here. (*As she still holds him from sheer surprise, he jerks angrily away, saying:*) Let me alone!

LUCILE. It couldn't be George. It was an old man with a beard.

GEORGE (*approaching her on tiptoe, and in a fearful whisper*). The beard was false. He learned it at college!

LUCILE (*excitedly and taking GEORGE by the arm*). What did he say?

GEORGE (*motioning her away*). Get away from me. He said he had been insulted and kicked. (*Jumps and looks behind him.*) And he never wanted to see any of you again. So he was going to commit suicide —

LUCILE. Horrors!

GEORGE (*waxing angry*). Yes, and he went clear to the top of an awful high building, and he walked right to the edge of the roof, and he looked over, and —

(*Working his arms furiously as though he were about to jump.*)

LUCILE (*horror-stricken*). Yes!

GEORGE. But just as he was going to jump, his foot slipped and he—came down in the elevator.

LUCILE (*in great relief*). Oh! (*Meditatively.*) Could it—could it have been—George?

GEORGE. Of course it was. (*Intensely.*) He was disguised. He was going to give you a surprise, and (*whispering*) he saw something which broke his heart.

LUCILE. Poor George — (*Softly.*) Where is he now?

GEORGE. He has gone to Panama.

LUCILE (*with a start*). Panama!

GEORGE (*glibly*). Yes. I saw him get on the train. He's gone there to dig a canal or something. (*Digging at the stage with the mop.*) And he's going to catch fever and die. (*He extends his hand, shakes an imaginary hand, and says:*) Hello, Fever!

(*Then he puts on a doleful expression and looks around for a convenient death-bed.*)

LUCILE (*jumping forward*). Goodness, don't! It's too terrible.

GEORGE (*with an accusing shake of his finger*). Now see what you've done.

LUCILE. Poor George. What did he say?

GEORGE. Like this. (*Marching up and down the stage and with fierce vehemence.*) False, wretched, lying, cheating, disloyal girl! My heart is broken! All my life is wrecked. There is nothing left to live for. (*To LUCILE.*) Now aren't you sorry? (*Kicking pineapple toward her.*) Ssss—sick her, Piney!

LUCILE (*in despair*). What have I done? (*Weeping and approaching him.*) What have I done?

GEORGE (*backing away*). Keep away from me. (*She drops her handkerchief, and stands with her hands over her face. He minces around her, plainly averse to touching the handkerchief, and finally picking it up with the carpet-sweeper, he extends it to her at arm's length.*) Here's your handkerchief.

LUCILE (*not noticing. Boohooing*). When Father turned him out, I heard him say: "You know not whom you kick." (*GEORGE jumps and looks behind him.*) That sounds like George. (*With conviction.*)

GEORGE. Of course it was George. But he didn't stay on that train that was going to Panama.

LUCILE (*brightening*). No!

GEORGE. No, he got off, and he says to me: "What would you do if the only girl you ever cared for married some one else?" (*Shouting.*) I says to him: "Catch the false wife and make her confess." (*Approaching LUCILE and taking her by the wrist.*) "Make her show you her husband, and then kill him." (*This "kill" in a screech.*) "I'll do it," says he. (*Watches her narrowly during these disclosures to see what effect they will have on her, but she does not understand.*) How would you prefer to have him die?

LUCILE (*still weeping*). And George always called me honey.

GEORGE (*caustically*). Then why didn't you stick?

(*He holds the skillet under her head for her to weep in.*)

LUCILE. Father was too hasty.

GEORGE. Hasty! He ought to be arrested for exceeding the speed limit. (*Jumps.*)

LUCILE. Do you know where George is now?

GEORGE. You bet I do.

LUCILE. You are very kind, sir, and you seem to have taken a great interest in me. Will you do something for me?

GEORGE (*looking around apprehensively*). To meet your father?

LUCILE. I beg your pardon.

GEORGE. I said glad to favor.

LUCILE. Will you take a message to George?

GEORGE (*gruffly*). Yes, and I'll bring the answer, and all I will ask in return is a certain cream pitcher in that refrigerator.

LUCILE. You shall have it. Tell George that Father's heart is broken —

GEORGE. Are you sure it's his heart?

LUCILE. Yes, of course. Why?

GEORGE. I thought perhaps it was his foot.

LUCILE. Oh, no. And tell George to come back and I will explain everything. Ask him if he won't forgive us.

GEORGE (*shaking his head emphatically*). No, he won't.

LUCILE. Won't what?

GEORGE. Forgive you.

LUCILE. How do you know?

GEORGE (*pulling off his hat and speaking in his natural tone*). I'm George.

LUCILE (*rushing to him*). Oh, George!

GEORGE (*backing away and shouting wrathfully*). Keep away from me. (*Then dolefully.*) Doesn't your husband object to your wearing that pin — (*Pointing.*) That fraternity pin. (*Whimpering.*) That I gave you.

LUCILE. My husband?

GEORGE. Certainly, your husband.

LUCILE. But George, dear, I have no husband.

GEORGE. You have so. (*Pointing accusingly.*) Haven't you got on a wedding ring?

LUCILE. That isn't a wedding ring. That's the ring of our girls' club.

GEORGE. Then why is it of plain gold and on your wedding ring finger?

LUCILE (*beginning to cry*). That's one of the club

secrets. If you don't like it, I'll throw the horrid thing away. (*She takes it off and drops it.*)

GEORGE (*picks up ring and looks it carefully over*). What does this inside mean? (*Spelling slowly.*) S-t-u-n-g?

LUCILE. That's another one of the club secrets.

GEORGE (*looks at her doubtfully, shakes his head, and then brightening, asks*). Say, Lucile. Aren't you really married?

LUCILE. Of course not.

GEORGE. That being the case, I shall continue a ceremony which your father recently interrupted.

(*He goes to refrigerator, opens lower part, produces cream pitcher, and from it takes engagement ring, which he carries to LUCILE, and removing his hat, he takes her left hand, and places ring upon it.*)

LUCILE (*looking at new ring*). Oh, George!

GEORGE (*they fall into each other's arms*). Oh, Lucile!

COOK (*she enters at this point through kitchen door and stands on porch. Catching sight of GEORGE and LUCILE embracing, she is paralyzed with fear for a moment, and then screams*). Master! The burglar's choking Miss Lucile again!

(*There is an unintelligible roar from in the house, and then enter FATHER with his rolling-pin, through kitchen door.*)

FATHER. Where? Where?

COOK. There. Look at him; he's killing her. She can't speak.

(*LUCILE is looking at GEORGE with an adoring gaze, and they are too engrossed in each other to realize they are being watched.*)

FATHER. Capture him, Cook.

(*They tiptoe stealthily up behind the pair of lovers, and COOK puts her arms around GEORGE's waist, while FATHER brandishes the rolling-pin over his head.*)

GEORGE. I surrender.

LUCILE. Father!

FATHER. It's all right, Lucile. We'll save you. Hang

on to him, Cook. (*To GEORGE.*) Move one step, sir, and I will strike you down.

GEORGE. Glad to oblige you, General Cornwallis, but please don't kick me, for I'm very sensitive.

LUCILE. Father!

FATHER. Take your hands off that girl!

(*GEORGE releases LUCILE from his embrace, but she keeps her arms around his neck. COOK moves her hands to get a better grip.*)

GEORGE. Ouch! She's tickling me!

LUCILE. Father, can't you see who it is?

FATHER (*peers into GEORGE's face*). Certainly, I can. It's the burglar.

LUCILE. No, it's not. It's George.

FATHER (*looks again*). Well, bless my soul! (*All his animosity disappears, and he slaps his knee.*) A thousand pardons, George. Let him go, Cook. (*COOK does so, and FATHER asks rapidly :*) Why? When? What?

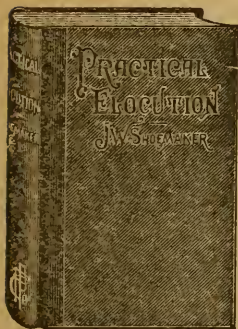
LUCILE (*archly*). And Father, we're engaged.

FATHER. God bless you, my children! (*He looks at GEORGE with a bewildered air, and wants to know testily :*) But George, my boy, what on earth are you doing in those clothes?

GEORGE (*he looks from them to the club ring, which he still holds, and then, imitating LUCILE, he says*). Oh! That's another of the secrets of our girls' club!

CURTAIN

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